

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T MANAGUA 0377

FOR SECRETARY VANCE FROM AMBASSADOR THEBERGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, NU
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT CARTER'S SPECIAL CONCERN FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WAS EXPLAINED TO SOMOZA WHO AGREED THAT EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS CORRECT AND PROPER. SOMOZA DOUBTED THAT GOVERNMENTS WOULD BEND TO PUBLIC CRITICISM OR WHEN STRONG SELF-INTEREST WAS AT STAKE, AND HE CRITICIZED DOUBLE STANDARD ON THIS ISSUE. HE NOTED THAT GON RECORD DURING STATE OF SIEGE COMPARED FAVORABLY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, THAT LESS THAN FOUR HUNDRED PERSONS HAD BEEN DETAINED DURING PAST TWO YEARS, THAT DETAINEES WERE GIVEN FAIR HEARINGS AND ALL COURT MARTIAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST FSLN GUERRILLAS HAVE BEEN OPEN TO PUBLIC. HE REAFFIRMED FRIENDSHIP FOR THE UNITED STATES AND NEW ADMINISTRATION. END SUMMARY

1. DURING THE COURSE OF A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA AFTERNOON JANUARY 24, 1977, I TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS MY DUTY TO INTERPRET AND EXECUTE THE PURPOSES OF THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND HIS FOREIGN POLICY. THEREFORE, IT WAS INCUMBENT UPON ME TO EXPRESS PRESIDENT CARTER'S DEEP CONCERN, A CONCERN SHARED BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND BY ME PERSONALLY, TO PROTECT AND ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND LIBERTY IN THE WORLD.

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2. WE EXPLAINED TO SOMOZA THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD EMPHASIZED THAT THE RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES WITH OTHER COUNTRIES UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WILL BE CONDITIONED AND SHAPED BY THEIR CONDUCT IN THE REALM OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND LIBERTY. WE REMINDED HIM THAT WHILE OUR CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MUST BE BALANCED BY OTHER INTERESTS, THESE CONCEPTS REPRESENT POWERFUL MORAL FORCES IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD AT LARGE. WE CITED WOODROW WILSON'S MAXIM:

"THE GREATEST FORCES IN THE WORLD AND THE ONLY PERMANENT FORCES ARE MORAL FORCES." IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR HIM TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS BORN A FREE REPUBLIC BASED ON THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN LIBERTY AND RIGHT. AMERICAN HISTORY IS A RE-CREATION IN EACH GENERATION OF THE IDEALS THAT WERE CONCEIVED AT THE BEGINNING. WE DID NOT WISH, I SAID, FOR THERE TO BE ANY MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT OUR ATTACHMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND LIBERTY.

3. PRESIDENT SOMOZA REPLIED THAT HE WAS IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE BY PRESIDENT CARTER. HE BELIEVED

THAT PLACING GREATER EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS CORRECT AND PROPER, SINCE IT WAS A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM AND CONCERN OF ALL NATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, SAID SOMOZA, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO SEE WHAT PRESIDENT CARTER, OR ANYONE ELSE FOR THAT MATTER, COULD DO TO PERSUADE GOVERNMENTS TO ALTER THEIR DOMESTIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES, PARTICULARLY IF STRONG MEASURES WERE FELT TO BE NECESSARY TO THEIR SURVIVAL. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS SYMPATHETIC TO EFFORTS TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES, BUT THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO AVOID THE KIND OF DOUBLE STANDARD NOW PRACTICED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

4. WE AGAIN DREW SOMOZA'S ATTENTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT GOVERNING FMS THAT THE DEPARTMENT SUBMIT REPORTS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF ALL COUNTRIES RECEIVING U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE. IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING, I SAID, THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S REPORT ON NICARAGUA WOULD SOON BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONING, THE PRESIDENT MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS: 1) DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS, SINCE THE STATE OF SIEGE, LESS THAN FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE HAD BEEN DE-SECRET

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TAINED FOR MORE THAN ONE DAY, AS A RESULT OF GON OPERATIONS AGAINST THE FSLN GUERRILLAS, 2) ALL DETAINEES ARE GIVEN A HEARING AND ALLOWED TO HAVE A LAWYER REPRESENT THEM; THE HEARINGS ARE FAIR AND FOLLOW U.S. MILITARY COURT PRACTICES, 3) ALL COURT MARTIAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE FSLN HAVE BEEN OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND ARE OBSERVED BY THE NEWS MEDIA, LAWYERS AND FAMILIES OF THE ACCUSED. SOMOZA ASSERTED THAT NICARAGUA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE COMPARED FAVORABLY WITH MOST LATIN COUNTRIES.

5. IN CONCLUSION, SOMOZA REAFFIRMED NICARAGUA'S TRADITIONAL FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, AND THAT PRESIDENT CARTER SHOULD BE ASSURED THAT HE WAS A FIRM AND LOYAL FRIEND. HE REQUESTED THAT I CONVEY HIS BEST REGARDS AND GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE.

6. COMMENT: SOMOZA IS WELL-INFORMED ABOUT PRESIDENT CARTER'S VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. AS IN THE PAST, HE DEFENDED HIS GOVERNMENT'S RECORD AND APPEARED RESIGNED TO FOREIGN CRITICISM, MUCH OF WHICH HE BELIEVES TO BE UNJUST, TENDENTIOUS AND POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. HE IS

CONVINCED THAT PUBLIC, PUNITIVE ACTION ON THIS ISSUE WILL ALIENATE
DWINDLING NUMBER OF HEMISPHERIC COUNTRIES FRIENDLY TO THE UNITED
STATES.
THEBERGE

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